

VZCZCXYZ0003  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSK #1192/01 2721322  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 291322Z SEP 05  
FM AMEMBASSY MINSK  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3072  
INFO RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 3157  
RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KIEV 2932  
RUEHVL/AMEMBASSY VILNIUS 3377  
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 3044  
RUEHRA/AMEMBASSY RIGA 1423  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 0678  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS MINSK 001192

SIPDIS

DEPT ALSO FOR INR  
KIEV ALSO FOR USAID

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [BO](#)  
SUBJECT: New Poll - Lukashenko Already Winning

Refs: A) Minsk, B) Minsk 992

11. (U) Summary: NOVAK released the results of its August - September survey and presented an analysis to Pol Chief on September 27. Lukashenko's rating jumped 5 percentage points while the leading opposition contenders' ratings remained below one percent. However, the percentage of those who did not know whether they would vote for Lukashenko increased to 46 percent. Lukashenko, his government, army, state media, orthodox church, and national bank received high levels of trust while the independent media, OSCE, and NATO were distrusted the most. The respondents were aware of the ethnic Poles' conflict with the GOB and were divided about who was to blame. Most people get their information from the state-controlled TV and state press and very few listen to foreign broadcasts. End Summary.

12. (U) Pol Chief met with Andrei Vardomatsky, head of the NOVAK polling service, on September 27. Vardomatsky presented the results of his latest poll conducted nationwide between August 30 and September 9. The poll included 1068 respondents.

Lukashenko's Approval Rating Jumps  
-----

13. (U) In NOVAK's June survey, the percentage of respondents who would vote for Lukashenko if elections were tomorrow remained stagnant at 42.3 percent, but the percentage of those who would vote against the president dropped to 18 percent - its lowest in two and half years (ref A). In September, however, 47.8 percent of those polled would vote for Lukashenko and only 12.3 percent would vote against him. Anatoly Lebedko of the United Civil Party was a distant second, receiving one percent and the rest of the opposition receiving less than 0.5 percent. The other 46 percent of respondents did not know who they would vote for or simply did not answer. In an effort to gain a better understanding of Lukashenko's support among different demographic groups, NOVAK juxtaposed Lukashenko's positive ratings with the positive rating of Russian President Vladimir Putin. [Note: Putin's ratings were calculated from polling data collected in Russia.]

14. (U) Vardomatsky focused on the respondents' age,

education, residence, and income. Below are the results:

| Income<br>----- | Lukashenko<br>----- | Putin<br>----- |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Low             | 29.0(%)             | 51.5           |
| Average         | 32.3                | 50.6           |
| High            | 24.4                | 49.8           |

#### Residence -----

|              |      |      |
|--------------|------|------|
| Metropolis   | 23.7 | 52.8 |
| Large Cities | 22.5 | 50.8 |
| Small Cities | 16.2 | 49.2 |
| Villages     | 40.7 | 52.7 |

#### Age ---

|               |      |      |
|---------------|------|------|
| 18 - 35 years | 11.1 | 57.0 |
| 36 - 54       | 18.4 | 48.1 |
| 55 and older  | 55.8 | 47.1 |

#### Education -----

|                   |      |      |
|-------------------|------|------|
| Below Secondary   | 62.6 | 43.3 |
| General Secondary | 37.4 | 52.4 |
| Secondary Special | 24.1 | 51.6 |
| Higher            | 17.8 | 55.2 |

¶5. (SBU) Comment: It is not surprising that pensioners and people living in villages support Lukashenko the most. Retirees in Belarus receive higher pensions than those in Russia and on a monthly basis. In April, the average pension rose eight percent and in August, Lukashenko ordered an 11-percent increase to approximately USD 100. The pension hike is in addition to the usual benefits, such as pharmaceutical discounts and free access to public transportation. Lukashenko's billion-dollar rural revival program has provided villagers with new, larger homes (though of bad quality), paved roads, electricity, communication (cellular and internet), and all other amenities that had previously been available only in large cities. The rural revival program also provides for the construction of over 1500 agricultural communities with stadiums, fitness centers, cultural buildings, and businesses while collective farms are receiving large "loans" to modernize and buy new equipment. His high approval rating indicates that Lukashenko's policies towards these groups have not been in vain. End Comment.

#### Who Can You Trust? -----

¶6. (U) Similar to previous polls, NOVAK measured the respondents' level of trust in state and social institutions and organizations. Government institutions remained the most trusted while international and independent organizations remained on the bottom of the list.

| Name<br>----         | Trust<br>----- | Distrust<br>----- | Hard to Say<br>----- |
|----------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Orthodox Church      | 77.6(%)        | 9.9               | 12.5                 |
| Army                 | 72.0           | 17.4              | 10.6                 |
| National Bank        | 67.9           | 18.0              | 14.1                 |
| President            | 61.9           | 21.5              | 16.6                 |
| Belarus Government   | 58.3           | 25.1              | 16.5                 |
| State-Run Mass Media | 57.5           | 34.1              | 8.4                  |
| UN                   | 44.6           | 23.3              | 32.1                 |
| Non-State Mass Media | 28.5           | 48.8              | 22.7                 |
| OSCE                 | 22.0           | 34.3              | 43.6                 |
| NATO                 | 17.0           | 48.5              | 34.5                 |

#### Belarusians Split On The Language Issue -----

17. (U) Despite recent controversy in the opposition camp over the use of Russian instead of Belarusian in the soon-to-begin Deutsche Welle radio broadcasts (ref B), only 10.9 percent believe the broadcasts should be in Belarusian. Thirty percent believe the broadcasts should be in Russian and 20.6 thought it should be a combination of both.

KROL